

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 9424

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV CB CH

SUBJ: CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT APPOINTS TWO NEW DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTERS, ANNOUNCES UPCOMING VISIT TO PEKING

SUMMARY: THE QUESTION OF WHO RUNS CAMBIDIA MAY BE ON
THE WAY TO BEING RESOLVED WITH THE RGNU'S APPOINTMENT
OF IENG SARY AND SON SEN AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS AND
THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A PEKING VISIT SCHEDULED FOR DEPUTY
PRIME MINISTER KHIEU SHAMPHAN AND THE NEWLY ELEVATED
IENG SARY. SUCH MOVEMENT SUGGEST THAT THE NEW REGIME
HAS DECIDED ON ITS NEW LINE-UP FOLLOWING ITS TAKE OVER
OF PHNOM PENH AND IS NOW OFF TO CHINA TO SETTLE THE
PROBLEM OF SIHANOUK'S RETURN. END SUMMARY

1. NCNA REPORTS AN AUGUST 12 RGNU PRESS COMMUNIQUE
ANNOUNCING THAT "TWO MORE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS ARE
APPOINTED, AS PROPOSED BY THE RGNU TO STRENGTHEN ITS
WORK. THE FOLLOWING APPOINTMENTS HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY
SAMDECH NORODOM SIHANOUK, HEAD OF STATE OF CAMBODIA AND
CHAIRMAN OF FUNK, AND SAMDECH PENN NOUTH, CHAIRMAN OF THE
POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF FUNK AND
PRIME MINISTER OF RGNU:

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1) MR. IENG SARY - DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR

FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE.

2) MR. SON SEN- DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE.

THERE ARE NO CHANGES IN THE POSITIONS OF THE ORIGINAL CABINET MEMBERS.

2. ON AUGUST 13 NCNA ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT A FUNK/RGNU DELEGATION AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE PEOPLE'S ARMED FORCES OF NATIONAL LIBERATION OF CAMBODIA AS ITS LEADER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY AS ITS DEPUTY LEADER WILL COME TO THE PRC ON AUGUST 15 " ON AN OFFICIAL FRIENDLY VISITS".

3. LOCAL HONG KONG COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER TA KUNG PAO IN ITS NEWS COMMENTARY ON AUGUST 14 CARRIED THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND OBSERVED THAT KHIEU SAMPHAN'S VISIT WILL BE THE FIRST CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATION TO CHINA SINCE THE LIBERATION OF CAMBODIA. THE COMMENTARY RECALLS SAMPHAN'S FIRST VISIT TO THE PRC IN APRIL 1974 (ALONG WITH IENG SARY) WHEN HE MET CHAIRMAN MAO. THE COMMENTARY GOES ON TO NOTE THAT SIHANOUK IS CURRENTLY VISITING NORTH KOREA AND THAT HE TOLD A JAPANESE LEGISLATOR THAT HE MIGHT RETURN TO CAMBODIA IN SEPTEMBER.

4. COMMENT: AS FIRST GLANCE THE ELEVATION OF TWO CAMBODIAN OFFICIALS TO A LEVEL EQUAL TO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER KHIEU SAMPHAN MIGHT SUGGEST THAT SAMPHAN IS SLIPPING IN THE CAMBODIAN HIERARCHY. THIS IMPRESSION MIGHT BE REINFORCED BY THE FACT THAT SAMPHAN'S TITLE OF DEFENSE MINISTER WAS MISSING FROM THE ANNOUNCEMENTS. HOWEVER, ANOTHER POSSIBILITY, AND ONE MORE LIKELY IN OUR VIEW, IS THAT SAMPHAN IS SHEDDING HIS FUNCTION AS DEFENSE MINISTER WHILE CONSOLIDATING HIS POSITION AS DE FACTO LEADER OF CAMBODIA. ON THE SAME DAY AS THE ANNOUNCEMENT, SAMPHAN GAVE AN INTERVIEW ON RADIO PHNOM PENH, THE FIRST SUCH BROADCAST BY A CAMBODIAN OFFICIAL SINCE THE TAKE-OVER. THIS COMBINED WITH SAMPHAN'S POSITION AS DELEGATION LEADER TO PEKING ARGUES STRONGLY THAT KHIEU SAMPHAN MAINTAINS A POSITION OF PRIMACY IN CAMBODIA. SAMPHAN'S VISIT TO PEKING COUPLED WITH REPORTS OF SIHANOUK'S

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PLANNED RETURN TO PHNOM PENH RAISES THE POSSIBILITY THAT THERE MIGHT BE A MEETING AT PEKING TO DISCUSS THE " HEAD OF STATE'S" RETURN AND POSSIBLY EVEN HIS SAFETY WHILE IN CAMBODIA.
END COMMENT.
CROSS

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